

Written Statement Submitted for the Record by
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Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Anchorage, Alaska
to the House Ways & Means Committee
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Hearing on Improving Programs Designed to Protect at Risk Youth
Held on June 16, 2011
Submitted on June 30, 2011

The Cook Inlet Tribal Council submits this statement for the record for the Hearing on Improving Programs Designed to Protect At-Risk Youth held by the United States House of Representatives Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources on June 16, 2011.

Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) is an Alaska Native tribal organization, with tribal authority delegated through Cook Inlet Region, Inc., organized through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and recognized under Section 4(b) of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (PL93-638, 25 U.S.C. 450b).

CITC is the primary provider of educational, workforce development, and social services for Native people in Anchorage. Our mission can be summarized in three words: People. Partnership. Potential. For nearly three decades, CITC has been building human capacity by partnering with individuals to help them achieve personal goals that result in lasting, positive change for themselves, their families, and their communities. Each year, CITC serves more than 10,000 individuals and their families through more than 50 programs.

We understand that various stakeholders are providing testimony regarding the reauthorization of Title IV-B, a program that we rely on significantly. Title IV-B, Subpart I funds have enabled CITC and the eight regional Cook Inlet Tribes to establish an ICWA Advisory Council to guide joint efforts in prevention and reunification across the region—a significant accomplishment given the independent relationships among tribes in this area. Title IV-B, Subpart II funds help CITC to maintain its information infrastructure to support the continuum of services available to participants seeking CITC services. We are committed to continuously improving our infrastructure and as a result of this funding have implemented a 'results-based accountability' process to identify meaningful outcomes to collect and measure. The funds have allowed CITC to provide reunification support to an annual average of thirty families engaged in supervised visitation services. In the most recent fiscal year, 70% of children assisted achieved a permanent and preferred placement. CITC's Child Welfare and TANF collaboration project 'Agency Without Walls,' funded by Title IV-B Subpart II, has enabled CITC to de-silo and integrate our services within the organization to maximize impact for our participants.

Our greatest sustainable resource is the potential of our children. The development and stewardship of this resource is by far our greatest responsibility, our greatest opportunity, and the single most important ingredient to a secure economic future for Our People. Their protection and care is of utmost importance to us. Our children will be our leaders and our caretakers. For this reason, we would like share our priorities as they relate to the reauthorization of Title IV-B.

Tribes and Tribal organizations face significant challenges when it comes to child welfare and limited resources are available to resolve those challenges. Although Title IV-B program funding levels are not sufficient to meet all of our needs, Title IV-B is an invaluable resource to Tribes and Tribal organizations.

Tribal and Tribal organizations' access to programs such as Title IV-B is an important representation of the federal trust responsibility. Access to this funding helps to ensure that our children receive care from those who know their needs best and are most equipped to respond to them—Tribal communities.

In order for CITC to continue to successfully serve Our People's unique needs, we recommend that Title IV-B, Subparts 1 and 2 be reauthorized and that tribal access to Title IV-B funding be increased. In addition, we'd like to recommend some changes.

First, we strongly urge the subcommittee to protect Title IV-B, Subpart 2 funds for the Regional Partnerships to Improve Outcomes for Children Affected by Parental Substance Abuse Grant as is. This funding supports grantees addressing meth and substance abuse issues. There are six current tribal grantees, of which CITC is one. These programs not only help the children and families of these Tribes, but have also provided models from which tribes (and states) nationwide can learn from, and are the only grants available that allow Tribes and Tribal organizations to address this important nexus between child welfare and substance abuse. The Regional Partnership funding has enabled CITC to develop more effective partnerships with the Alaska State Office of Children's Services and the Native Village of Eklutna for the purpose of integrating tribal, child welfare and recovery services to prevent unnecessary foster care placement. These improved partnerships have reenergized the effort to share data and determine critical future data elements across tribal, state, and service lines to better understand the impact of interventions.

Second, we strongly support increasing the tribal set-aside for Title IV-B, Subpart from 1% to 3%. Under Title IV-B, Subpart 1 about two-thirds of the 565 eligible tribal governments receive less than \$10,000 per fiscal year. At least half of the Tribes receive amounts under \$5,000 per fiscal year. The bare minimum needed to establish a child abuse and neglect prevention program in any tribal community is approximately \$80,000.

Third, CITC is not in a position to take advantage of a Tribal Court Improvement Program (CIP) as we do not have Tribal courts. However, we strongly support previous recommendations made by NICWA and other organizations that tribes be made eligible for CIP funding, and urge the Subcommittee to give the recommendations every consideration. Tribes administering IV-B and/or IV-E should be made eligible for CIP funding under Title IV-B, Subpart 2. CIP funding supports dependency courts and is not currently available to tribes. This funding would help tribes to integrate their courts and child welfare programs.

In addition, Title IV-B state plan requirements should be amended to enable improved tracking of outcomes data on AI/AN children, including the promotion of tribal-state cooperation and coordination, and expanded data collection requirements, with tribal consultation. Recently, the

American Public Human Services Administration (APHSA) also recommended that additional information be collected by the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information Systems (SACWIS) so as to better define specific measures to evaluate how AI/AN children are doing in the child welfare system and ways to improve outcomes. States and tribes need data to identify specific problems and determine and implement the appropriate interventions/solutions.

Finally while it is vitally important to reauthorize Title IV-B programs, we urge the subcommittee to do so as a part of a larger child welfare financing reform effort. It's time to make prevention a priority and Tribes and Tribal organizations need to be at the table when it happens. Currently, very few federal child welfare programs fund prevention work. Federal programs should address the issues that bring children into foster care, not solely post-removal issues.

In closing, we thank the Subcommittee Members and staff for their continued attention to the unique needs of our children. We ask that as you consider reauthorization of Title IV-B, you remember how critical this funding is to Tribal organizations and the families and children that we serve.

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